

Newsletter

Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens

2014 No 9

The heat is on! It is nearly Summer time in the Botanic Gardens and that brings many challenges for plants and people to survive the heat and lack of rain. Many trees and plants though are bursting with blooms luring butterflies and birds. Enjoy the latest from 'The Botanic Gardens'...

We have had some wonderful exhibitions in the Lagoons Gallery... There was such precise detailing in artworks in the last exhibition finishing on November 2nd.

'BOTANICA 2014'... An Exhibition by the Mackay Botanical Art Interest Group



Colourful, curious and captivating flora from our local region was showcased in the botanical art exhibition 'Botanica 2014' by the Mackay Botanical Art Interest Group (BAIG).

The Botanica 2014 Exhibition's special feature walls this year were 'Fabulous Fungi' where the artists used a range of techniques to portray their chosen subject.

Botanical art combines detail, accuracy and artistry, with many hours needed for each watercolour painting or graphite drawing. A glimpse into the inner workings of the botanical artists was provided by displays of their sketchbooks, photos, odd pods and all things flora, showing how the artists take a live specimen and create a "living" piece of botanical art.

Featured image is Bridal Veil Fungus *Dictyophora multicolour* by Madge Barnett.

On show now is ...

'The Mates Exhibition No 3... Inspired by Nature'

Lagoons Gallery... Wednesday 5th November – Sunday 30th November 2014



Roy Huff and Merv Nairn, 'The Mates', are still painting and their third exhibition at the Lagoons Gallery showcases acrylic paintings inspired by nature. There is a wide range of creatures, landscapes, plants and flowers to enjoy. Paintings also feature in the showcases are complemented with nests, seashore finding and butterflies.

Featured image is 'Sunset' by Roy Huff.

He just can't stop painting!

Roy Huff is painting even more pictures. Come and see him at work at the Lagoons Cafe and Gallery at the Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens. Every Friday, Saturday and Sunday in November 2014.



Free Friday Guided Walks ... have now finished for the year



The last few Free Friday Guided walks of 2014 have been some of the best attended. Eleven people including visitors from Melbourne, Northern NSW / Ballina and some locals too enjoyed the walk on Friday 24th October and a few said they would return the following week to find out about Shade Garden Secrets.

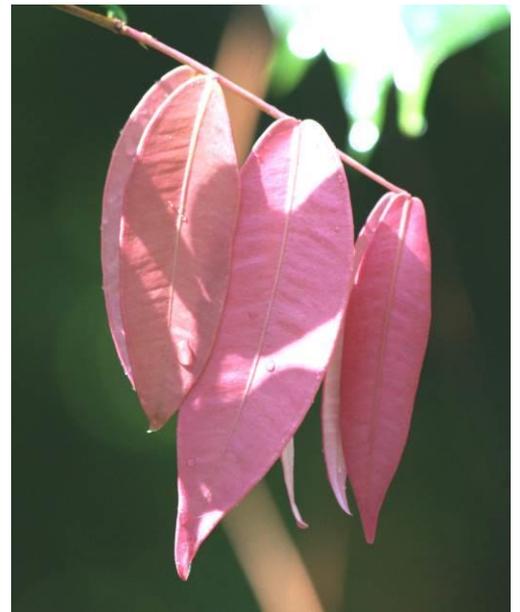
Pictured are ten of the eleven people, who visited the Botanic Gardens.

Five of these participants (Margaret, Cavil, Carol, Bill and Margaret) came again for the final Special Free Friday Guided Walk "Shade Garden Secrets" on October 31st.



There were many special plants discovered in the Tropical Shade Garden. We met the hat snatching vine, saw exploding seed capsules, flowers rising from the soil, spore bearing ferns, pungent fruit and powder puffs!

Pictured is Powderpuff Lilly-Pilly bloom and new leaves of *Syzygium wilsonii*



Continuing the walk around the outside of the Shade Garden another discovery was made.

What was the secret?

Pictured are the five walkers who discovered there was a snake down the drain-hole. Sprinkling some water down the drain, confirmed that the snake was alive and well and fortunately a fair distance down and away from us.

Margaret, Cavil, Carol, Bill and Margaret plan to come again next year to see other parts of the Botanic Gardens.

A big thank you is forwarded to Margaret Lane, who lead many Free Friday Guided Walks sharing her passion for native plants when Maya had Education Sessions on Fridays. Free Guided walks by appointment are still available for groups as 'end of year activities' to finish off the year.

In the Botanic Gardens, Dale reports...

Tropical gift from Cairns to Mackay

Cairns Botanic Gardens has one of Australia's best display of **Zingiberales** - the term used to group together Gingers, Heliconias, Costas and other related families best known for their beautiful flowers, attractive leaves and in some cases - edible tubers and flowers.

Over recent times Zingiberales have become popular garden plants, and the 'Garden of Gingers' is a small trial into those genus and species that can adapt to the much cooler winters and windier conditions experienced in Mackay and especially at the MRBG - one of the coolest places in Mackay City due to the Lagoons 'bowl' effect.

Since 2007 - MRBG staff have attempted to travel to Cairns to procure from Cairns Botanic Gardens extensive collection for the Garden of Gingers to be located under the palms in Palm Walk, next to the Nebo Road Water Treatment Plant. This is one of the naturally shadiest and dampest locations due to the existing Caribbean Pitch Pines located in the water treatment plant, and the adjacent Fernery.



Zingiber neglectum

However procurements was not meant to be easy, with first the 2008 Flood, 2009 BGANZ Congress, 2010 Cyclone Ului , 2011 Cyclone Yasi, accidents for the MRBG staff and finally NQ flooding postponed the collection trip each year. However the BGANZ Qld Regional conference finally allowed Dale and Team Leader Ross Demuth the opportunity to drive up to Cairns and post conference - collect. With the help of Cairns Curator David Warmington, 75 of the most showy and unusual species and cultivars were collected, transported to Mackay and temporarily potted up to establish. The Garden of Gingers will be planted out in March 2015 and along with understory palms, will create a lush, tropical look and feel to this area. We say a huge thanks to Cairns Botanic Gardens for allowing us to collect. Hopefully it won't be another 6 years before we return!

Welcome to new staff

Kellie Woodford and David Allen have recently commenced at the MRBG. Kellie has filled the Gardener position left by the departure of Andy Miller and has taken over special maintenance of the area from the Whitsunday Garden to the Geology Garden and Coastal Fringe area just past the Eulamere Boardwalk. Kellie will be a main point of contact for the Gardens Friends during the special Wednesday gardening bees in the Heritage Garden commenced as a trial this year and recommencing again in March 2015 with 2 hour 'mini-bees' focusing on the annual and special perennials growing here - including the Kitchen Garden.



David (Dave) has filled the new position of Infrastructure Maintenance Officer. Dave will maintain and install everything 'not growing' at the MRBG - including pathways, all public infrastructure, decking and boardwalks, sculptures, signage and more... throughout the entire MRBG site and it will be wonderful to return the various infrastructure to the 'as new' look it all had when first installed. Please say hi to Kellie and Dave if you see them at the MRBG.

Small Explorers:

“Wildlife in the Gardens” turned out to be a thrilling day for Small Explorers and even for the adults too on Tuesday October 14th:

First there were stories to read and creatures in the meeting room to focus our attention ...



Then after seeing the life cycle of the Zodiac Moth in photos and pinned creatures...



...we were able to see them fluttering around FOR REAL! in the Botanic Gardens.



After noticing spiders, butterflies, birds and dragon flies during our small walk, we searched the native Hibiscus for Harlequin bugs.



There were many to see, but the most exciting display was the group of nymphs shedding their skin and looking red raw as they waited for their new skin to harden...

...and then we found 1st instars that had just emerged from their eggs.

Babies!



The adult Harlequin Bug was still guarding her now empty eggs while the nymphs huddled together under the leaf. What a great experience!

Hi Maya, Thank you so much for a fantastic, educational experience this morning. We all had an absolute blast going on an adventure hunt & learning new things in the meeting room & outside in the beautiful gardens. We were in the car for about ten minutes chatting away about our favourite parts of the excursion when one little one asked "When are we going back again?" Everyone agreed we have to return for more exciting adventures! Thanks again Maya. We look forward to seeing you again in November. Happy Smiles, Pia & the Cradle to Crayons Family Day Care Girls.

More small explorers...

Twenty-four three year old children from Good Start Early Learning were a very excited group when they visited the Botanic Gardens on October 8th. They were very keen to see Mini-beasts.





First stop was the meeting room with displays of posters, pinned creatures and live creatures in observation tanks (so children could get up close and personal which out the creatures disappearing!)

Books also proved too hard to resist...



... but the mention of finding creatures in the Gardens soon had everyone ready with hats and shoes on!

It was thrilling to see Bungee Jumping Caterpillars and later to hear many times... "Here's another one"... referring to the Harlequin Bugs being discovered all over the Native Hibiscus bushes.

Plant-ed:



On the 10th October, thirty seven Prep aged children from St John's Catholic School at Walkerston arrived with loads of enthusiasm and excitement to discover different "Living Things" and "Life Cycles" in the Botanic Gardens. The North Queensland Day Moth (Zodiac Moth) was one of the first fluttering creatures to be watched closely and one resting on low Native Ginger leaves gave us a close up view.

Harlequin Bugs presented the children with all stages of their life cycle, with adults guarding eggs, to small nymphs just hatched from eggs, to different sizes of instars showing off their gleaming colours to the orange coloured adults hiding in the flowers.



Seeing a blue tiger butterfly just in front of your face was mesmerizing for this young girl and the butterfly was quite content to just keep sipping nectar from the flower with its long straw-like tongue.

More Plant-ed:

The creatures were still plentiful when forty eight Year 1 children came from St Mary's Catholic Primary School to learn about Wildlife in the Botanic Gardens. The Meeting Room was filled with live and pinned creatures as well as lots of photos, activities and books. Half the group went on a walk with Maya and the other half delved into what the meeting room had on offer.



After a snack break the groups swapped and Maya took the second group out to explore the Botanic Gardens. One accompanying father was very good at spotting creatures and a large Golden Orb Spider was one of his finds.

Look there it is!



Having many Native Hibiscus bushes in the Screens and Hedges section of the Botanic Gardens makes it easy for the children to circle around and find a range of creatures in these “mini- ecosystems”.

Harlequin Bugs are the most plentiful, but the children also discovered Praying mantis, Caterpillars, Assassin Bugs, blue Damselflies, Green Jewel Bugs and Case moth caterpillars.

Including a walk to see the range of birdlife around the Lagoons certainly gave the children an appreciation of the wealth of Wildlife in the Botanic Gardens...and now knowing where to look in plants, they may discover some at their homes or school as well.

What have the friends been up to?



Dale Arvidsson held our interest with his wealth of knowledge of the trees in the Myrtaceae forest, including the Eungella Bottle brush, the Swamp Blood wood, the Brachychiton with a wonderful display of pink flowers and loads of others. The walk also included the Timber Trees Arboretum and

making our way back to the Meeting Room, Friends Ilene De-Bondi and Maya Harrison shared the Trees they had researched for the day. Ilene talked about the Burdekin Plum *Pleiogynium timorensis* and Maya shared her new-found knowledge about the Mango Pine *Barringtonia calypttrata*.

We had a tree change!

There was only a small group of Friends (quite a few less than was expected) and after sharing some delicious afternoon tea and a cuppa meandered through the Botanic Gardens to learn about the assortment of trees that line Lagoon Street.



Back at the Meeting Room, there was time for another cuppa and the idea that the Meeting Room could become a space for Friends to meet on a very regular basis.

Heather Melville had brought in some bulbs that were excess to her needs and the Friends present at the Tree Walk were keen to try their hand at growing a couple of them... or three or four... and this type of getting together and sharing plant knowledge and specimens could be one of the activities that might happen often next year ????

What do you think?

The Meeting Room becomes the Friends Meeting Space every 1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month. (It is already booked in!)

Friends can...meet and socialize, help out the staff with label making, take photographs to assist with a "flowering diary" – noting what is flowering in the Botanic Gardens every month so we can gather a whole years' worth of images and notes... A DATA BASE!

Friends may like to share cuttings, bulbs, seeds, fruits, recipes (just like the impromptu bulb sharing by Heather Melville at our second afternoon tea mentioned above). The computer (Yes, a computer just for the Friends) is available for Friends to research plants for signage, self-guided walks for the public or just to increase your own knowledge. The Friends who attend the Heritage Gardens Working Bees (on Wednesdays too) might like to refresh with a cuppa after their morning toil and catch up with others. The Friends also have a library which would be available to look through too. Friends may also like to be part of the plants stocktake and assist putting out labels in the Gardens... a great way to learn which plant is which. Go on mini walks with Dale or Maya and learn more about the Gardens...so maybe guided walks can occur more frequently. Let us know what you think or share some other ideas. This is a new venture for the friends and we are open to any suggestions. Call Maya on 49527300 or 00409750453 or email botanic@mackay.qld.gov.au .

Some of the trees discovered during the Friends Tree Walk.

Barringtonia calyptata

MANGO PINE, CASSOWARY PINE CORNED-BEEF WOOD TREE

This is a beautiful tree with large glossy leaves and stunning pendulous flowers.

The glossy leaves tend to be whorled at the ends of the branches and the fragrant white flowers are in long pendulous spikes and appear just before a flush of new growth.

The flowers have only 4 small white petals but numerous long white stamens and are full of nectar. Flowering occurs in late dry season (October / November).

The beautiful fluffy white blooms have a pervasive honey scent and are heavy with nectar, making them a popular food source for insects, blossom bats and the rainforest's nectar feeding birds including lorikeets and honeyeaters.



Lovely hawk moths are the main pollinators of the Mango Pines' flowers which then produce large blue-bloomed fruits, which smell of mangos when ripe, but are poisonous.



Image by William T. Cooper

The cassowary is possible the only animal that finds the fruit palatable. (You won't see any cassowaries here in our Botanic Gardens)



The Mango Pine *Barringtonia calyptata*, is so called for its soft white timber (like pine) and mango-smelling fruits. It has another interesting common name, due to the scent of its wood, and that is the Corned-beef Wood Tree.

The bark surface on larger trees is somewhat scalloped and both the surface and inner trunk layers (blazes) are very fibrous. Twig bark is also rather strong and fibrous when stripped.

The tree is sometimes harvested from the wild for local use as a source of fibre and wood (a useful general purpose timber) and as a medicine.

The tree has a limited medicinal reputation with a leaf decoction (which contains saponins) being utilised by Aboriginal people for the treatment of chest pain. This species has been used as a fish poison adding it to water to stun fish.

Such an interesting tree with many stories to share...

Burdekin Plum *Pleiogynium timorense*

A large, solid tree found particularly in coastal regions.



It can grow to 20 metres and has green, oval-shaped leaves. It produces a dark purple fruit, its woody seeds or stones resembling miniature pumpkins.

The fruit is acidic but quite pleasant to taste. It must be completely ripe before being eaten.

Indigenous people would bury the plums underground for several days to help ripen the fruit.

The bark and roots of the tree were crushed and washed in small waterholes and streams as a 'fish poison'. The fish become stunned and float to the surface, but the flesh of the fish is unaffected.

Referenced from... 'Bush Tucker Field Guide'... Les Hiddins... Explore Australia Publishing 2003

Native Kapok Bush *Cochlospermum gillivraei* / *fraseri*

Flowering in the Botanic Gardens...

Commonly seen in Northern Australia, it seems to favour the drier country, particularly rocky ground. The bush is rather spindly occasionally reaching 5 – 6 metres, but usually only 3 metres.

Eye catching yellow flowers are produced from May to November. From July to December green pods hang from the branches. Within these pods is the 'Kapok' or fluffy 'cotton'

The roots of the younger trees were roasted on hot coals and eaten. The yellow petals were eaten raw in small quantities and the inner bark from the trunk was twined to form a strong bush string.



The young, dried out stems of the tree can be used as fire sticks. The 'kapok' when fully dry, provides good tinder for lighting fires. It was also used to stuff pillows and mattresses (in days gone by).

Referenced from... 'Bush Tucker Field Guide'... Les Hiddins... Explore Australia Publishing 2003.

Just like they said they would... They were back for more.

Small Explorers... Water Features and Creatures.

On November 11th, seven children and five adults arrived to see a range of macro-invertebrates, frog and fish on display in the meeting room of the Botanic Gardens.



Live creatures were sorted into separate observation tanks so the children could identify them and match them to the photos next to the containers.

The information on the laminated pages also gave the adults information they could share with their children (thus appearing very knowledgeable)

After a story titled "In the small, small pond" we went searching for water places in the Botanic Gardens to see if we could see similar creatures.

The Finch Hatton Gorge Waterway 'creek' was where we found shimmering quivering dragonflies and damselflies.



Maya ventured into the small, small pond and scooped up water skaters and a large dragonfly nymph (pictured). Having the children on the bridge over the water gave them a close up view while all staying stay and sound.

We saw fountains, waterfalls and a large lagoon on our walk as well as birdlife, water plants and turtles.



The children engaged with a real experience of evaporation by painting with water on sunny pavers. Their paintings disappeared... where did they go? **Evaporated!** Jumping in the last puddles of water was fun too.

These fun and educational opportunities for toddlers and kindergarten aged children 18 months to 5 years are held monthly or by appointment.

Pictured are a Freshwater Prawn and a Predacious Diving Beetle.



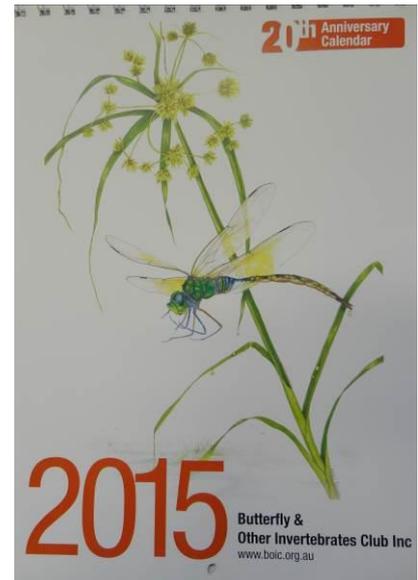
Done your Christmas shopping yet?

The Garden's Shop might just have something for everyone.

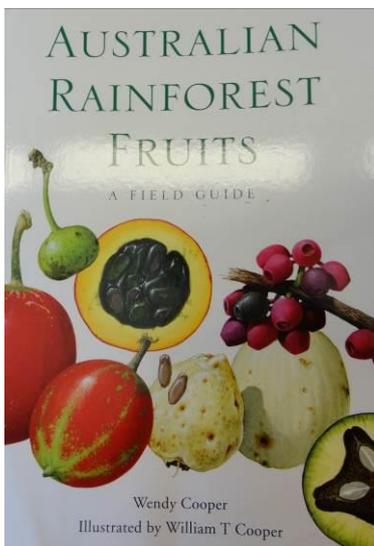
Calendars...

Jeremy Boot
Birds \$20

Butterflies and Other
Invertebrates \$15



A range of
beautiful wooden
carvings by local
artist Ron Draper
(prices as marked)



Field Guide of Australian Rainforest Fruits \$55

And don't forget those caterpillars...
\$15.00



The closing months of 2014 still has lots of things to see and do...



Just like Christmas decorations in the shops, the Christmas Orchid is appearing now!

...And it is Sun Smart!

If you look very closely at the individual flowers of the Christmas orchid you can see a small child with legs and arms, a cute little face... all under a very big sun hat.

The Christmas Orchid *Calanthe australasica* is an evergreen terrestrial orchid. It has soft, obovate leaves which grow to 90cm with showy white flowers borne on erect spikes to 150cm in summer. They are commonly seen locally at Eungella, especially on the Wishing Pool Circuit, near Crediton Hall. Come and see it growing at the Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens.

For the Kids...

Small Explorers: Christmas Decorations in the Gardens...

Tuesday December 9th: 9.30 am – 11.00am



Fun and educational opportunities for toddlers and kindergarten aged children 18 months to 5 years held monthly or by appointment.

Let the Botanic Gardens Visitors Services Officer, Maya Harrison, take you and your small children to special areas of the Botanic Gardens to explore Nature's Christmas decorations'...berries, flowers and special tinkling bells and decorations on Tuesday 9th December 2014 at 9.30 – 11.00. Meet at the Meeting Room (opposite the Lagoons Café and Gallery, closed Mondays) and join in this festive walk and creative activity just ready for Christmas. Let us know if you wish to come along by contacting the Botanic Gardens on 49527300 and booking the date with us. Tell a friend with young children so they can come along too

December School Holiday activities... 'All Wired for Christmas'.



Christmas Decorations made from Nature and Rainbow wire!

A Creative treat: Children will create all sorts of festive decorations using gum-nuts, pinecones, driftwood, leaves, seedpods, rainbow wire and sparkly bits and pieces. The two hour session will also include a Christmas Decorations Hunt in the Botanic Gardens.

2 sessions per day: 10am -12noon and 2pm - 4.00pm.

Tuesday 16th Wednesday 17th, Thursday 18th December. Cost \$5.00 each
Bookings are essential.

January School Holiday activities...

There are 3 'nature based and creative activities' over the 3 weeks in January 2015. Cost \$5.00 each
For more details, visit the Botanic Gardens website www.mackayregionalbotanicgardens.com.au
Bookings are essential. We do have **Waiting Lists** in case of cancellations.

New Exhibition in December:

'Power of Nature': Creative Shots Photo Club's Annual Exhibition

Lagoons Gallery: Wednesday 3rd December 2014 – 18th January 2015



Creative Shots Photo Club members have been out and about taking many different images this year to portray the theme of their exhibition... 'Power of Nature'.

It might be a butterfly emerging from a chrysalis, the surge of incoming waves on rocky shores, a lightning storm, or a newly sprouted seed. It may depict the destructive results of weather or the wonderment of nature's design.

This combination of images makes for an exciting exhibition. Visitors to the exhibition are also encouraged to vote for the image they feel best demonstrates the exhibition's theme 'Power of Nature'.

Image: 'Sky Splitter' by Maya Harrison

Always welcoming new members, you can find out more about the Creative Shots Photo Club at www.creativeshots.com.au.

December will be Dazzling!!!

Christmas in the Gardens: SUNDAY Dec 14: 2014 5.30 – 8.30pm

Come along and bring all the family to this very popular Christmas event on SUNDAY December 14th from 5.30 to 8.30pm on the Tropical Sun Garden lawn adjacent to the Lagoons Cafe.



Christmas in the Gardens will feature a range of local entertainers for an evening of family enjoyment. Come, listen and sing-a-long with Karen Bonham, Anette Worthington and also Lindsay Haines and her musical students...

The 'Friends of the Gardens' will have their ever-popular raffles, glow candles, bracelets, and Christmas songbooks for sale.

Who is coming to the Friends Christmas Party...???
Let's celebrate on Saturday 29th November, 6.30pm



Remember to RSVP to either Robin or Maya SOON!

For information about any items mentioned in this newsletter please...

Contact the Botanic Gardens on 49527300 or email botanic@mackay.qld.gov.au.

You can also visit the Botanic Gardens website on <http://www.mackayregionalbotanicgardens.com.au>